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ABSTRACT

This study was done to evaluate the effectiveness of a one and a half hour workshop on changing attitudes toward women. The subjects were 34 counselors who attended a workshop entitled "Intervention Strategies for Modifying Sex Stereotypes." The 27-item alternate forms were devised out of the full scale 55-item Attitudes Toward Women Scale and were called Form A and Form B. Eighteen counselors received Form A as a pretest and Form B as a posttest and 16 counselors received Form B as a pretest and Form A as a posttest. Twenty-one subjects returned the follow-up questionnaire (same as posttest) sent to them one month later. The results showed that counselors' attitudes became significantly more liberalized after the workshop and that these changes were retained at the time of follow-up, regardless of which form was administered. The finding is interpreted as bolstering the worthwhileness of offering a short-term workshop to modify sex-stereotypic attitudes. (Author)

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Effectiveness of a Brief Intervention Strategy in Changing Attitudes Toward Women

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Running Head: Changing Attitudes Toward Women

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Effectiveness of a Brief Intervention Strategy in Changing Attitudes Toward Women

Counselors are in a position to have a great impact upon the crucial decisions and life plans an individual makes. It has been shown that one person's expectations of another's behavior can come to act as a self-fulfilling prophecy (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). A counselor's assumptions about women's roles will probably be reflected in the counseling interview. Mental health workers, like people in general, hold strong beliefs about sex appropriate behaviors. The attributes comprising the male sex-role stereotype have been found to be more socially desirable and more functional for achieving success in our society than those comprising the female sex-role stereotype (Broverman,I. K., Broverman, D. M., Clarkson, Rosenkrantz & Vogel, 1970;Naffziger, in Schlossberg & Pietrofesa, 1972; Neulinger, 1968). Since these notions are currently being challenged as biased and growth inhibiting, counselors need to be aware of the degree to which their sex-role stereotypic attitudes affect their counseling behaviors.

Several studies have indicated differential responding on the part of amle and female counselors to the same problem, holding all input constant, except for patient gender. The differences were all in the direction of promoting traditional sex-role stereotypes in terms of clinical assessment (Bilick, 1972); educational and vocational choices (Smith,1972); and career goals (Schlossberg & Pietrofesa, 1973; Thomas & Stewart, 1971). Gardner (1971) argues that the goals of counselors trained in traditional programs can hardly be expected to do other than reflect sexist values and she suggests that what is needed are consciousness raising groups for counselors.

The question of how amenable to change these sex-stereotypic attitudes are is currently being investigated by a group of graduate students in the Department of Counselor Education at Boston University. Several strategies that have been successfully used to modify attitudes are referred to by Nickerson (Note 1). These include a career guidance project with role modelling (Shiraishi,1975), workshops of varying duration and content (Guin,1975; Kesselman, 1974),

various discussion groups and programs (Dorn, 1975; Nash, 1974), and women's studies courses (Michaelson, 1975; Speizer, 1975). The populations to date have been limited to junior college students and college educations majors, Puerto Rican adolescents, fifth grade girls and boys and fifth grade teachers.

To date no attempts have been made to use intervention strategies to change sex-role stereotypes of counselors nor has a single session strategy been evaluated. The present study undertakes to evaluate the effectiveness of a one and a half hour workshop upon changing attitudes counselors hold about women's roles. All subjects will be pretested and posttested with alternate forms of The Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS). It is expected that posttest scores will be significantly higher than pretest scores and that the gains made will hold at the time of follow-up one month later. Rosenberg's (1960) theory of attitude dynamics provides a rationale for the study. He says that people seek congruence between their beliefs and feelings toward objects. Attitudes can be modified by creating incongruity between the beliefs and feelings associated with them. In this study, an attempt will be

made to alter the belief whcih should result in the feeling changing to become consistent with the altered belief.

Method

Subjects

The subjects were 34 professionals in the field of counseling who attended the workshop entitled "Intervention Strategies for Modifying Sex Stereotypes" at The New England Personnel and Guidance Conference in Portland, Maine on October 28, 1974. Eight subjects were thrown out of the sample for reasons such as: not writing their their names on both forms, not completing either a pretest or posttest, and not filling in all items on the test. 22 subjects returned the follow-up questionnaire. One subject had to be eliminated for not answering all the items so the final follow-up sample included 21 subjects. All the New England states involved in the conference were represented in the sample. In order to keep time demands on subjects reasonable, no demographic information was requested. Subjects were assigned to two groups--those on one side of the room were given Form A as a pretest and those on

the other side were given Form B as a pretest. They were told that a summary of the results would be sent to them.

Instrumentation

The Attitudes Toward Women Scale was devised by Spence and Helmreich (1972) to measure the attitudes toward the rights and roles of women in contemporary society. The full scale consists of 55 items. Two forms called A and B were devised by the author out of the full scale, each with 27 items. In order to have the same number of items on each form, one item had to be thrown away and item 35 was arbitrarily chosen for that purpose. In the AWS document, Spence and Helmreich give the factor loadings for the 55 items. The six factors they found were: 1) vocational, educational, and intellectual roles, 2) freedom and independence, 3) dating, etiquette, courtship, 4) drinking, swearing, and jokes 5) sexual behavior and 6) marital relationships and obligations. Construction of Forms A and B consisted of listing the items for each factor on pieces of paper and then randomly assigning items from each factor to Form A or Form B as they were drawn from a hat. The two forms were created as equals in that they both contained approximately

the same number of items from each factor randomly distributed. It was assumed that they were in fact measuring the same thing and so were considered appropriate for use interchangeably in a pretest-posttest comparison.

Although a short, 25 item form of AWS already exists and has been validated by Spence and Helmreich (1972), the author chose not to use it in order to minimize the influence of the memory factor. It was judged that the time lag between pretest and posttest was too small in this study to enable utilization of the same form for both. Scoring is the same for all forms of AWS. Each item is scored from 0 to 3. The higher the total score, the more liberal or profeminist the attitudes.

Procedure

At the beginning of the workshop, the experimenter was introduced to the audience. She explained that the workshop was being evaluated and asked for their cooperation by filling out two forms--one before the workshop began and one immediately afterwards. They were told that in a month's time a follow-up questionnaire

would be sent to them. They were asked to write their names and addresses on both forms for mailing as well as matching purposes.

Form A was handed out to people on one side of the room and Form B was handed out to people on the other side. 18 subjects completed Form A as the pretest and Form B as the posttest and 16 subjects completed Form B as the pretest and Form A as the posttest. The purpose of giving them Form A-B or B-A was to minimize the effect that might occur in the pretest-posttest comparison due to form rather than treatment.

Although there were some problems in form administration, they did not seem to affect the outcome. The experimenter had intended to collect all the pretests before the workshop started but this was not possible . Because the workshop got started late and additional time could not be lost, forms were collected from some before it began and from others once it had already started. The posttests were distributed at different times--to some while they were still in small groups and to others after the large groups had reconvened. Some people arrived late and others left early which further

complicated the distribution and collection process. Because the workshop ran a few minutes overtime, some people completed the posttests in a hurry.

Subjects chose this workshop out of a possible 16 that were being offered simultaneously. The format of the workshop consisted of a brief introduction by Dr. Nickerson and the three doctoral candidates who were to be discussion group leaders as well. They described their research and interest in the area of sex-role stereotype modification, announced forthcoming publications of their work, and explained the format for the workshop. People were then asked to turn their chairs around to form circles in the four corners of the room. Groups were approximately equal in size. One discussion leader went with each group. They were asked to fill out a 15 item Sentence Completion Test with such items as "When I see two girls fighting, I respond by....." or "I respond to crying men by....." This was used to stimulate a group discussion which lasted 45 minutes. One person recorded the essence of the discussion and reported this to the large group when it reconvened for approximately 15 minutes. A

subjective evaluation by the leaders following the workshop indicated positive feelings about it's success.

Results

A two-way analysis of variance with repeated measures was performed for the pretest-posttest comparison. The summary of the data appears in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Examination of the information given in the table disclosed a main effect of treatment i.e. the workshop $F\ (1, 32) = 11.40$, $p < .01$. Among the present sample of professional counselors, participating in a one and a half hour workshop changed their sex stereotypic attitudes in the direction of greater liberalism. No main effect of form was found. This means that comparing scores for Form A with those for Form B, combining the pretest and posttest, no difference was found. Thus the gains made could not be due to form alone.

A significant trial x form interaction was found F (1,32) = 7.90, $p < .01$. A close inspection of the data revealed that Form A and Form B did operate differently, whether administered as a pretest or posttest. The group receiving Form A as a pretest had initially higher scores than the group receiving Form B as a pretest. Although both groups significantly increased their scores on the posttest, the gains were greater for the group receiving Form B first than for the group receiving Form A first. Some of the gain for the B-A group could be partly attributed to form. The error variance due to form inequivalence was controlled for in this study by having approximately half the subjects receive Form B as a pretest and half receive Form A as a pretest. Despite the partial contribution of form to the gain scores made by the B-A group, the highly significant effect of the workshop should not be underestimated.

A two-way analysis of variance was performed for the posttest-follow-up comparison. The summary of the data appears in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

Examination of the information given in the table disclosed no significant differences between the posttest and follow-up one month later. Subjects retained the gains they had made as a result of the workshop whether they were given Form A for posttest and follow-up or Form B for posttest and Follow-up.

Discussion

The results of the present study indicate that the attitudes held by a group of counselors can be significantly "liberalized" by a brief intervention strategy designed for that purpose and that the gains made hold over time--at least one month. Recent studies at Boston University, using a similar pretest-posttest design, have found AWS to be successful as a measure of change (Dorn, 1975; Gun, 1975; Speizer, 1974). Lunneborg (1974) did a validation study of AWS as an assessment device for a women's studies course at the University of Washington. She found the scale to be still sensitive to changes in attitude even for a group of students at an initially very high level of liberalism. She found that sexual behavior was the last stronghold

of conservatism even for strong feminists.

In the present study, although form itself was not found to be a significant variable, Form A was found to yield higher scores as both a pretest and posttest. Based on a subjective inspection of the data, a possible explanation can be offered. It was generally agreed upon by subjects that women should have equal rights with men in terms of their vocational, educational, intellectual, political, and social roles. Divergence in scores, when it occurred, was primarily on items related to sexual behavior. Subjects tended to be less liberal on these items (same as Lunneborg, 1974) reported above. There are seven items loading the sexual factor. When the two forms were devised, three items were randomly assigned to Form A and four were randomly assigned to Form B. Of the four assigned to Form B, two seemed to elicict particularly conservative responses, even among high scorers. These two statements are: "It is all right for wives to have an occasional, casual, extramarital affair," and "There should be no greater barrier to an unmarried woman having sex with a

casual acquaintance than having dinner with him." The inequality of the forms in this respect may be responsible for the greater conservatism of total scores on the one than the other. In order to validate this speculation, a statistical item analysis would have to be done.

Some other factors may be operating to confound the results. Because the subjects chose this workshop over several others offered at the same time, it can be assumed that their motivation was higher than would be true of a group of subjects randomly selected. It is probably easier to change attitudes of a group positively predisposed.The Attitudes Toward Women Scale, like most Likert attitude measures, is susceptible to social desirability affecting subject's responses. The instrument itself, by increasing consciousness of women's rights and roles, could have sensitized people to the workshop and the gain scores could in fact be reflecting an interaction of the test with the workshop. A one month follow-up is a relatively short period of time and it would be important to see whether the results would hold up over a longer period of time.

The results can have important implications for future counselor-client interactions. The success of a brief intervention strategy in liberalizing attitudes toward women opens up the possibility of exposure to large numbers of people. These workshops could be offered at conferences, conventions, on site as part of in-service training, and at a variety of professional meetings. If we assume that sexist attitudes held by counselors lead to the inhibition of the individual's developing his or her full potential, the importance of reaching large numbers of counselors becomes apparent. Counselors have significant impact upon the lives of others, not only in their traditional role as helpers, but also in their positions as consultants and educators where they make important policy decisions affecting the future lives of young people.

Reference Note

1. Nickerson, E. T. Women as a second class minority: A case for changing sex-role stereotypes. Paper presented at the Inter-American Congress of Psychology, Bogota, Columbia, December 1974.

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Table 1

Analysis of Variance:

Pretest-Posttest

Source	df	MS	F
trials	1	74.3125	11.40*
forms	1	0.3750	0.00
subjects	32	80.2188	12.30*
trial x form	1	51.5000	7.90*

* $p < .01$

Table 2

Analysis of Variance:

Posttest-Follow-up

Source	df	MS	F
trials	1	6.8750	0.83
forms	1	136.1250	1.69
subjects	19	80.4770	9.72*
trial x form	1	4.3125	.52

p < .01